DECISION NOTICE

AND

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

2008 Cooperative Gypsy Moth Project

Hoosier National Forest, Monroe County, Indiana

- Adjacent Private Lands -

United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service
Hoosier National Forest
Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry
And
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
Division of Entomology and Plant Pathology
Division of Forestry

February 2008

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- ADJACENT PRIVATE LANDS -

INTRODUCTION

This Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) accompanies the Environmental Assessment (EA) titled "2008 Cooperative Gypsy Moth Project, Brownstown Ranger District, Hoosier National Forest and state and adjacent private lands, Monroe County, Indiana", written by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Division of Entomology and Plant Pathology and Division of Forestry and the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, State and Private Forestry and Hoosier National Forest. The EA is a site-specific analysis of the potential effects of implementing the project, which is referenced as the proposed action. The IDNR is requesting that the USDA-Forest Service (USFS) provides both technical and financial assistance on this project. Procedures outlined by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) must be followed in order for federal assistance to be approved. The NEPA process provides a mechanism to identify 1) issues and concerns from the public, 2) reasonable and prudent alternatives for the proposed action, 3) potential environmental impacts of the alternatives, and 4) appropriate mitigation measures. In addition to the EA and this Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, the USFS requires that a Work, Safety and Security Plan, and a Biological Evaluation also be completed before the project can be implemented.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

IDNR, in cooperation with the USFS, proposes treating one site on the Hoosier National Forest in Indiana Mating disruption (pheromone flakes) would be used at the 15 gram rate on the proposed treatment site totaling 1,861 acres (326 acres of private lands and 1535 acres of national forest). The objective for this cooperative project is to eradicate the gypsy moth population from the proposed treatment site.

Pheromone flakes would be aerially applied in accordance with label directions during mid June to early July just prior to male moth emergence. IDNR would administer the overall operational and administrative aspects of the cooperative project. The USFS would cost-share on applications and would provide technical assistance to the IDNR.

DECISION

The EA discusses alternatives for treating gypsy moth populations in Indiana. The EA documents a site-specific environmental analysis conducted jointly by the IDNR and the USFS for federally supported gypsy moth activities in 2008. The EA is tiered (40 CFR 1502.20; 1508.28) to the 1995 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) entitled "Gypsy Moth Management in the United States: a cooperative approach" (USDA 1995).

The EA includes a site-specific discussion of:

1. Purpose and need for action
2. Alternatives, including the proposed action
3. Affected environment
4. Environmental consequences

The four alternatives that were considered in detail in this analysis were:

1. No action
2. Mating disruption
3. Btk
4. Btk and Mating disruption

Based upon the analysis documented in this EA and the FEIS, it is my decision that the objectives of the proposed action and the needs of the people of Indiana are best met by Alternative 2. This alternative is compatible with the preferred alternative discussed in the FEIS and selected in the Record of Decision, January 1996. My decision is for the 326 acres of private lands in the proposed treatment site, and this part of the cooperative project would be implemented only if the national forest lands were also treated.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION

The general policy of the USFS is to protect forest-related values from damaging insect and disease outbreaks. This policy stems from the Plant Protection Act of 2000 (7 U.S.C. section 7701), the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, as amended (P.L. 95-313), which incorporates provisions of the Forest Pest Control Act of 1947, and the Cooperation with State Agencies in Administration and Enforcement of Certain Federal Laws (7 U.S.C. section 450). These laws provide for federal and state cooperation in forest insect and disease management. The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act has been reauthorized by the 2002 Farm Bill (P.L. 107-171d) and grants authority to the Secretary of Agriculture to assist state officials through cooperative programs to control forest insects and diseases on non-federal and federal forestlands of all ownerships. These programs have several purposes: (1) to enhance the growth and maintenance of trees and forests, (2) to promote the stability of forest-related industries, and associated employment, through the protection of forest resources, (3) to conserve forest cover on watersheds, shelterbelts, and windbreaks, (4) to protect outdoor recreation opportunities and other forest resources, and (5) to extend timber supplies by protecting wood products, stored wood, and wood in use.

USDA Departmental Gypsy Moth Policy (USDA 1990) assigns the Forest Service the responsibility to assist state and federal agencies to eradicate isolated gypsy moth infestations that are on or contiguous with federal lands. On January 16, 1996, Joan M. Comanor, Deputy Chief of the USFS for State and Private Forestry, and Donald F. Husnick, Deputy Administrator of APHIS for Plant Protection and Quarantine, signed a Record of Decision (ROD) (USDA 1996) for the FEIS. The FEIS and ROD document the decision by USDA to support eradication, slow-the-spread, and suppression strategies for gypsy moth management. The ROD and FEIS specify that implementation of this alternative will require the completion of site-specific analyses conducted in accordance with NEPA and the environmental policy and procedures of the USDA (USDA 1996, p.1).

My decision to choose Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative is based upon compliance with and the authority granted by the federal laws and regulations previously described and with USDA policy. This project complies with the Forest Pest Management Control Project Standards as described in the USFS Manual (FSM 3430) and the Cooperative Control Project Participation Criteria as described in Chapter 10 of the USFS Handbook (FSH 3409.11). This project complies with USFS policy to protect and preserve the forest resources of the nation against destructive forest insects and diseases (USDA 1995, Vol. II, p. 1-3).

I did not choose the other alternatives for the following reasons:

Alternative 1, No Action: –With this alternative, no action to control or eradicate the current population of the gypsy moth in the treatment area would occur. Under this alternative as populations establish and spread, damage and regulatory action would occur sooner than if an action alternative is selected. Resulting effects of such a quarantine would regulate movement of firewood, logs, other timber products, recreational vehicles and other articles. Gypsy moth trappings surveys would also continue to monitor growing populations. This alternative is required for analysis by the National Environmental Policy Act but does not meet the purpose and need for action. Selection of this alternative would allow populations to establish, reproduce, and spread at a quicker rate.

Alternative 3, Btk: – Btk is effective at eliminating gypsy moth populations at low levels but was not chosen because another more favorable alternative was available.

Alternative 4, Btk and Mating disruption: – Very low population levels are present in the site and no egg masses were found. The flexibility to use Btk in combination with mating disruption was not needed.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have reviewed the EA and carefully considered the issues and concerns expressed by the citizens of Indiana. Based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the EA, I have determined that implementing this decision in the manner described will not cause significant environmental impacts or adverse effects. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed for this project. This decision was made after considering the context and intensity of the project.

There are no significant effects after considering context and intensity of the project (40 CFR 1508.27). The site-specific EA evaluates the environmental consequences (effects) of the proposed action in the context of local and regional issues. A cooperative gypsy moth treatment, approximately 1,861 acres, would occur in one county. This is only a small portion of the total forested acres in this county.

The intensity of any effects is minimal for the following reasons:

1. Impacts from the applications are limited to the project area.

2. There is no indication that the general public will experience any adverse health or safety effects from mating disruption (USDA 1995, Vol III, p. 8-1 through 8-6).

3. Treatment materials will not affect wetlands or ecologically critical areas.

4. Treatment materials are not highly controversial and will help to maintain the quality of the environment, as it existed prior to gypsy moth infestations. Disrupt II is registered for gypsy moth and will be applied according to label requirements. This meets the provisions of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act of 1947 (7 USC 136) as amended.

5. There are no known unique or unknown risks associated with this project.

6. The decision to proceed is based upon the results of a site-specific environmental analysis conducted in accordance with NEPA. Decisions regarding future actions will be made in a similar manner.

7. The FEIS analyzed and demonstrated that neither cumulative environmental nor human health risks are associated with the use of treatment materials.

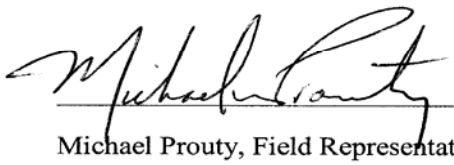
8. The action will not affect any item listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss of destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

9. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service was consulted, and stated “treatment effects are likely to be insignificant” for aerial application of pheromone flakes.

10. The proposed action complies and is consistent with all federal, state and local laws or requirements imposed for protection of the environment. The action is a cooperative project that has been planned, funded and will be implemented by agencies representing federal and state governments.

11. The public will be notified prior to aerial application.

This analysis was performed in compliance with Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice, February 11, 1994). This project may be implemented after this document has been signed.



2-14-08

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Date: